

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Alyssa Yeager, a student at San Benito High School, visited Washington this week to attend an awards ceremony for the annual Congressional Art Competition.

Her painting, titled "Bend It Like Beckett," took top prize in California's 17th Congressional District contest, which won her a trip to Washington. Her painting will also hang in the Capitol building for a year.

"Alyssa's painting is terrific," said Rep. Sam Farr (D-Carmel), who spent time with Alyssa on Thursday. "She's an excellent artist and a fantastic example for her classmates."

This is the 26th year of the contest, also known as "An Artistic Discovery." The competition is held in communities across the country and is the brainchild of the Congressional Arts Caucus, of which Rep. Farr is a member.

"Art is such an important part of a child's education," Rep. Farr said. "One of the foundations of scientific discovery is artistic creativity. We must support art programs for our children, both for the wonderful work they create and for the benefits that come from a well-rounded education."

Alyssa, who lives in Hollister, made her drawing using sepia-toned conté, a compressed, powdered charcoal. She used a photograph of an elderly man as her model.

"Old people are easier to work with," said Alyssa, explaining her choice of subject. "You can add more wrinkles and distort them more."

Alyssa, 17, has only practiced art for three years. It was her high school art teacher, John Robrock, who submitted Alyssa's drawing to the contest. Alyssa will be a senior this year and plans to attend community college after graduation, then apply to the San Francisco Art Institute. She hopes to continue her work in the field and hopes to become an art history

professor. Alyssa was accompanied by her mother, Cristina Santos.

The Central Coast's contest is organized by Bertha Muñoz, a congressional aide in Rep. Farr's Salinas office. Information is provided to area high schools in the winter announcing contest details. For further information on next year's program, call Muñoz at 831-424-2229.

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